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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Source Book for Social Origins: Ethnological Materials, Psychological Standpoint, Classified and Annotated Bibliographies for the Interpretation of Savage Society. By WILLIAM I. THOMAS. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1909. Pp. xvi, 932.)

THE bulk of the book consists of forty-seven selections from the best ethnological literature dealing with savage and prehistoric man. The selections are grouped under seven heads, *viz.*: "The Relation of Society to Geographic and Economic Environment", "Mental Life and Education", "Invention and Technology", "Sex and Marriage", "Art, Ornament, and Decoration", "Magic, Religion, Myth", and "Social Organization, Morals, The State". To each of these parts is appended a carefully prepared bibliography of the subject. The number of references varies from eighty-three to two hundred and sixty-five. Six supplementary bibliographies are added, one for each of the principal geographic areas of the globe, and, finally, a list of one hundred "best books" classified under the foregoing thirteen heads. All told, the fourteen bibliographies embrace two thousand titles and constitute an admirable survey of the best ethnological materials. To each of the seven groups of selections the author adds a few pages of pithy comment which indicate the trend of the best opinion on the subject.

Professor Thomas insists upon a psychological interpretation of the data regarding savage man and does not believe that societies are thrown into very divergent paths in consequence of their developing in unlike geographic environments. Since the operations of the mind are everywhere the same, early human society everywhere exhibits the same general pattern. Nor does he perceive any broad contrast between the workings of the savage mind and those of the civilized mind. He rejects Spencer's hypothesis that the nature-people are nearer than we are to the subhuman type of mentality. Our efficiency is due not to sheer superiority in mental power, but to the possession of an improved technique and of an accumulated stock of knowledge and ideas. Making proper allowance for the low state of knowledge and the paucity of materials to work with, the interest and ingenuity of the savage are of absolutely the same pattern as those of the modern scientist or inventor. The invention of the bow and arrow impresses the author as quite the greatest intellectual feat the race can boast.

In respect to education he brings out the fact, usually overlooked,

that nearly all savage education is moral and designed to promote the solidarity of the group. It is not, as with advanced peoples, a means of transmitting a precious indispensable fund of exact knowledge and key-ideas.

In the peculiar and elaborate sex code recently brought to light among the Australians the author sees a specialized product of a particular people rather than proof of earlier promiscuity. Practices often cited as survivals of marriage by capture are interpreted as conventionalized expressions of female coyness or as magical devices for averting ill-luck. Nor does he accept the assumption that the further back we go in human culture, the worse the woman is treated by her mate.

Spencer's "ghost theory" of the origin of religion is rejected. Belief in invisible agency, and consequently in spirits, would exist if there were no such things as sleep, dreams, and death. Both magic and religion are expressions of the logical faculty of a mind working unscientifically. Nature-worship springs up in the human mind quite as naturally as ancestor-worship. Whether worship is directed towards ancestors, nature, animals, plants, or the symbols of reproduction, is a matter determined in the history of thought in particular regions.

Averse as he is to dogmatizing, the author leaves as open questions some points popularly supposed to be settled by a particular theory. Frequently he finds merit in opposing theories, since each may explain how a certain practice or institution arose in a particular tribe or under special conditions. The psychology by which he interprets savage man is altogether more living and adequate than that which passes among most ethnologists. One readily sees that Professor Thomas has a kindly feeling for the nature-man and finds him quite as human and normal as the culture-man.

In every respect the book is done as well as the existing state of knowledge will permit, and it will undoubtedly do much to promote the study of this branch of sociology.

EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS.

What have the Greeks done for Modern Civilisation? The Lowell Lectures of 1908–1909. By JOHN PENTLAND MAHAFFY, C.V.O., D.C.L., of Trinity College, Dublin. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1909. Pp. xi, 263.)

WE may repeat of Professor Mahaffy's books what Aristotle says in effect of the Platonic dialogues: All are interesting and ingenious, but it is hardly to be expected that all should be equally good. The present volume, like its numerous predecessors, is discursive, trenchant, dogmatic, abounding in the *obiter dicta,* the anecdotes, the allusions that mark the man of wide experience, varied studies, and many hobbies; full of sententious saws and modern, especially Irish instances, sup-